

## The 2024 Ocean Decade Conference: Building the Ocean Decade roadmap to 2030 for the ocean we want Barcelona, Spain, April

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2024	
Task 1.1.9	Maintain relationship with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO,
Task 1.1.9.4	UN (United Nations) Ocean Decade Conference

Hosted by Spain and co-organized with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC/UNESCO) in its role as the coordinating agency of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the Conference hosted over 1,500 in-person attendees from approximately 124 countries and thousands of virtual participants as the highlight of the Ocean Decade Week (8-12 April). A large-scale platform for representatives from the scientific community, governments, NGOs and civil society, philanthropy, industry, and United Nations entities, this event was inclusive of all voices in the conversation surrounding ocean protection and conservation. Conference discussions strongly supported the significant achievements of the Ocean Decade as the largest global ocean science initiative ever undertaken and identified the following future priorities for ocean knowledge and science generation.



Secretary General Mathias Jonas, Assistant Director Sam Harper, and Public Relations and Communication Officer Sarah Jones Couture attended the Conference, co-hosted 2 satellite-events: one in partnership with the OECD on ocean mapping and the second co-hosted with IMO's World Maritime University on achieving gender equality in ocean sciences:

### 1) **The seabed data we need for the ocean we want**

This session aimed to look at the importance of advancing our understanding of the ocean and fostering increased investment in related activities.

#### **Speakers included:**

- Dr Mathias Jonas, Secretary General, [International Hydrographic Organization](#)
- Mr Mitsuyuki Unno, Executive Director, [The Nippon Foundation](#)
- Prof. Gideon Henderson, Chief Scientific Adviser, [Defra, UK](#)
- Mr Virgil Zetterlind, Director, [ProtectedSeas](#)
- Dr Jyotika I. Virmani, Executive Director, [Schmidt Ocean Institute](#)

- Mr Pierre Bahurel, Director General, [Mercator Ocean International](#)
- Att. Dr. Virginie Tassin Campanella, Founder & Director, [VTA Tassin – Public International Law firm for Oceans & Seas](#), IHO [ABLOS](#) Member

**Moderators were:**

- Ms Claire Jolly, Head Ocean Economy (IPSO Unit), [OECD](#)
- Mr Sam Harper, Assistant Director, [International Hydrographic Organization](#)

**2) Empowering Women for the Ocean Decade: Achieving Gender Equality in Ocean Sciences and Policy Making**

This event was co-hosted by WMU-Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute, International Seabed Authority and International Hydrographic Organization. It looked at how to establish an environment that allows for the equal and fair participation of women

**Speakers included:**

- Prof Ronan Long, Dr Zhen Sun, Ellen Johannesen, Dr Renis Ojwala, Dr Mariamalia Rodríguez Chaves, World Maritime University -Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute
- H.E.M Michael Lodge, Noémie Wouters, International Seabed Authority - Kingston
- Dr Mathias Jonas & Sarah Jones-Couture, International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)
- Arran McPherson, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Dr Marzia Rovere, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche
- Rima Brown, Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority
- Carlie Wiener, Schmidt Ocean Institute
- Kirsten Isensee, IOC UNESCO

The Conference itself consisted of two days of workshops, side events and related cultural exhibitions, followed by three days of plenary sessions. The six plenary sessions were organised to explore the work that is being undertaken to deliver each of the ten Decade Challenges. Each of these plenary sessions were augmented by a number of Parallel sessions which explored specific components of the Vision 2030 White Papers that have been drafted to set out a road map for the delivery of the Decade Challenges, and a blueprint for measuring progress. Several themes and activities that are relevant to the IHO and the seabed mapping Community were presented including coastal resilience, ocean observations, data collection, data management, standardisation. Updates on the Ocean Decade Data Strategy, the Data 2030 project and the Digital Twin of The Ocean (DITTO) project were discussed. Within these activities, a key principle explored was that of a federated system of data repositories, and the requisite standards, policies and community buy-in that would be required to make such a vision a reality. It was obvious that such an approach presents both potential opportunities for practical use cases of S-10x product specifications, and directly relates to IHO Strategic Goal 2 and 3. The Conference ended with a landmark series of major announcements and commitments which represent a substantive first step towards achieving the above priorities including the:

- Launch of a roadmap for cooperation between IOC/UNESCO and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation in the framework of the Ocean Decade.
- Launch of new Ocean Decade programmes on sustainable ocean planning, and on sustainable ocean management in Africa.
- Commitment by the Barcelona City Council and the Port of Barcelona to develop a Decade Collaborative Centre focusing on sustainable ocean economy.

- Launch of the Ocean Matcher Tool to enhance opportunities for philanthropic funding to Decade Actions.
- Launch of new funding opportunities for Africa through the Belmont Forum, and SIDS through the Marine Institute, Ireland.
- Launch of the Cities with the Ocean Platform to enhance the use of science for policy and decision making by coastal cities, including the offer of Qingdao Municipality to host the first Ocean Decade Coastal Cities Conference in 2025.

During the Closing Session, the speakers celebrated the successful conclusion of the three-day international gathering, which brought insights, feedback, and solutions through productive discussions and collaborations. These negotiations underscored the pivotal role of the Ocean Decade in catalysing transformative ocean science solutions for sustainable development and providing a visionary path towards 2030. The Conference concluded by setting the tone for further collective and concrete actions, outlined in the newly launched 2024 Ocean Decade Barcelona Statement. Based on insights shared by the global ocean community, the Statement identifies the priority areas of action for the Ocean Decade in the coming years. Vidar Helgesen, IOC/UNESCO Executive Secretary and Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, called to consider it as an actionable framework to be included in implemented scenarios to orient, guide, and refine existing initiatives, as well as new ones, on local, national, and global scales.

The Next Ocean Decade Conference will be in 2027.